

Shippers Exchange Saloon
50 S. Commerce Street
Mobile
Mobile County
Alabama

HABS No. AIA-789

HABS
ALA,
49-MOBI,
121-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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SHIPPERS EXCHANGE SALOON

Location: 50 S. Commerce Street, southwest corner of Commerce and Conti Streets, Mobile, Mobile County, Alabama
Geographic Location Code: 01-2100-097

Present Use: Demolished for the Water Street Urban Renewal Project, 1968.

Statement of Significance: This is a fine example of a modest turn-of-the-century commercial building in Mobile's active waterfront district.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: c. 1902
2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original and subsequent owners: This building was erected by Timothy Crowley as the new location of the Shippers Exchange Saloon, a business that Crowley had operated since 1878 in a building on the facing corner (northwest) at 26 S. Commerce Street. Although he acquired the property in 1889 from the estate of Charles Gardiner, Crowley did not construct the building until 1902 or 1903, in which year the business opened its doors in the new structure. The saloon remained in operation until Prohibition, and since has passed through various hands. It was the location of the "Sportsman's Cafe" when the property was acquired for urban renewal and the building demolished in 1968.
4. Builder or contractor: Unknown

B. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Mobile Deed Books, Probate Court Record Division,
Mobile County

2. Secondary and published sources:

Mobile City Directory, Mobile: Henry Farrow & Co., 1878-1920

Prepared by Charles A. Herrington
Architectural Historian
National Park Service
August 5, 1972

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

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A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This small handsome commercial building illustrates the persistence in Mobile of architectural designs based on classical sources. Employing the typical combination of brick, plaster, and cast iron, this early twentieth-century building blends harmoniously with other commercial buildings in the area, many of which were constructed fifty years earlier.
2. Condition of fabric: The structure was in generally good condition before demolition in 1968.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: This two-story building is basically rectangular, with truncated corners on each end of the north wall. The diagonal sections thus formed each measure 7'-4"; the east front is approximately 20'-0", and the north front is 50'-2".
2. Foundations: Not accessible.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: The exterior bearing walls are exposed red brick with stuccoed brick quoins at the corners, painted green. On the first story of the east front, there is an arcade of three openings stretching between the quoins. The arches have stuccoed voussoirs and ornamental keystones and spring from stuccoed Corinthian pilasters with cast-iron capitals on the sides and rest on cast-iron fluted Corinthian columns in the center. Both the northeast and northwest diagonal corners consist of single arched openings, identical in details to those of the east front. Additional single arched openings occur near each end of the north wall. A moulded cast-iron belt course runs around the building above the keystones.
4. Structural system, framing: Not determined, but assumed to be typical and of wood.
5. Porches, stoops: The entrances are at sidewalk level. There was originally a cast-iron balcony which ran the full length of the east and north fronts.
6. Chimneys: On the north wall, there are three brick chimneys that are corbelled at the top and have inset panels in the north faces. There is a plain brick chimney on the west wall.

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7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: Each of the seven arched openings was originally an entrance with double doors and a glazed transom, divided vertically and hinged. The transoms consist of two large quarter-circle lights and a fan of small lights outlining the arch. All doors are very heavy and panelled. Those of the diagonal entrances have an arched glazed panel in the upper portion with square panels below; all other doors have square panels at the bottom and top with glazed rectangular panels in the center (except those of the south bay of the east front, which give access to a stairway and have no glazed panels).
- b. Windows and shutters: The fenestration of the north front has been altered on the second floor. Originally, there were only four openings, directly above those on the first floor, the two in the center being full-length windows that gave access to the balcony. All windows on the main facades have stuccoed sills and flat moulded cast-iron cornices resting on small brackets. The full-length windows on the second story are double-hung wooden sash with two-over-four lights; all other windows are double-hung wooden sash with two-over-two lights. Hinge pintles for shutters are in place on all windows.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: It was not possible to observe the roof from any position, as it is obscured by the parapet.
- b. Cornice, eaves: The corner quoins visually support a cast-iron panelled frieze and heavy bracketed cornice with dentils. Above the cornice is a panelled parapet with moulded cap. It was not possible to ascertain whether the parapet is cast iron or stuccoed brick.
- c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: None are visible, but there is a skylight over the stairwell.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The first floor now consists of two major spaces, with the main entrance on the diagonal northeast wall. On the southeast wall, a heavy panelled door leads to the enclosed stairway on the south wall. On the second floor, the stairwell and hall are in the center of the south wall. The eastern end of the hall is enclosed with a plaster partition with continuous transom lights above to form a small room. On the north side, there are four interconnected rooms in a line, the two central rooms also having continuous pivoted transoms opening onto the skylighted hallway.

2. Stairways: A continuous flight of stairs is enclosed, ending at a turned newel and balustraded stairwell railing. A large circular handrail is along the south wall.
3. Flooring: Flooring throughout consists of narrow pine boards.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The rooms all have painted plaster walls and ceilings.
5. Doorways and doors: The majority of the doors are three-panelled, the upper panel being glazed with patterned glass. Some doors have glazed single-light pivoted transoms.
6. Special decorative features, trim: Wooden trim consists of simple mouldings around doors and windows, a plain baseboard, and a simple picture moulding.
7. Notable hardware: There are curved strap hinges on the inside of the fan-like transoms of the first-floor entrances.
8. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating: Central heating has been installed. No fireplaces remain, but there are two flues and the breastwork of a chimney on the second floor.
 - b. Lighting: Modern electric fixtures have been installed.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Before demolition, the building was located on the southwest corner of Conti and Commerce Streets in the middle of what was once an active commercial and wharf district.
2. Landscaping: The walls of the building are adjacent to the public sidewalk. An iron nameplate in the walk at the northeast corner reads: "Shippers Exchange".
3. Outbuildings: There is a one-story corrugated iron building added on the west.

Prepared by Woodrow W. Wilkins
Supervising Architect
National Park Service
July 22, 1966
and
Charles A. Herrington
Architectural Historian
National Park Service
August 7, 1972

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

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These records were prepared as a cooperative project during the summer of 1966 between the Historic American Buildings Survey and various agencies, organizations, and individuals of the City of Mobile. The Historic American Buildings Survey supplied the project supervisor, Woodrow W. Wilkins, and three draughtsmen, Carl J. Rosenberg (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Michael R. Foil (Auburn University), and Lowell K. West (University of Kentucky). One draughtsman, Elbert L. Coleman (Alabama A & M), was provided by the Mobile Housing Board, which agency administers urban renewal. The services of an additional draughtsman, James Eley, specifically designated as an architectural student from Auburn University, were made possible by contributions from numerous local architects and businessmen. The Historic Mobile Preservation Society, in agreement with the History Department of Springhill College, provided a student historian, Linda Carroll. Office space was supplied by the City of Mobile through the City Planning Commission. Roy Thigpen, a local photographer, was contracted to supply the photographs. All local arrangements were made by the Mobile Historic Development Commission, Mrs. Nancy N. Holmes, President. The project was edited during the summer of 1972 by Charles A. Herrington, Architectural Historian, in a cooperative effort between the Historic American Buildings Survey and the Mobile Historic Development Commission.